

More anecdotal evidence of the type-locality of *Chalcomitra rubescens stangerii*

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Amadon (1953) proposed that Shelley's assumption that *Chalcomitra rubescens stangerii* Jardine was collected by Thomson on Fernando Po [Bioko] should be accepted, and that the implication in Jardine's description (*Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist.* 1842, p. 187) that it was collected on the Niger should be disregarded.

Anecdotal evidence of the collection of the type of *C. r. stangerii* on Fernando Po is given in the account of the Niger Expedition written by Allen & Thomson (1848). Thomas R. H. Thomson, MD, RN, was appointed Assistant Surgeon of HMS *Wilberforce* and was a corresponding member of the Zoological Society of London. Places and dates in the narrative are corroborated by entries in the Captain's log of the expedition's ships, the *Wilberforce* and the *Albert* (P.R.O.Adm.51, 3706, 3549). The second volume of the Narrative contains a list of 46 birds collected during the expedition, 6 of which were collected by Thomson, including '*Nectarinia Stangeri*'. The list contains several errors and it would be unsafe to rely on it entirely, but the account of the collection of *N. r. stangerii* is particularly detailed.

"Habitat. Fernando Po, West Africa, . . . when the papaw (*Papaya carica*) [*Carica papaya*] is in flower, its sweet juice is the favourite food of these and other *Cimnyridae*. The specimen from which Sir W. Jardine figured the *C. Stangeri*, was shot by Dr. Thomson, who presented it to Dr. Stanger, as also others to the British Museum."

There is also an account in the text (Vol. 2, p. 222) of a collecting expedition in April 1842 by Thomson and C. G. Roscher to Jamieson's settlement at Shark River "near Bassa-pu", not far from Clarence [Malabo] in the north of the island. Here, '*Cimnyris Stangerii*' is noted as 'very abundant' and most of the sunbirds collected there were from the vicinity of a single *Carica papaya*, a species not indigenous to West Africa, suggesting that it was in a well settled, cultivated, locality. Thomson refers here to sending *N. r. stangerii* to England by Dr William Stanger (not, as Shelley, Dr Strange) who was geologist to the expedition and in whose honour Jardine was to name the bird. It is tempting to think that this is a description of the collection of the type but it is unlikely, Stanger had already returned to England by this time. It seems most likely that the bird was collected near Basupú (3°43'N, 8°41'E) on the northwest coast of Fernando Po between 20 October 1841 when Thomson went ashore there and 22 November 1841 when Stanger left the island.

Other species collected by Thomson during the expedition and presented to the British Museum, notably *Porphyrio alleni* and *Hirundo nigrita*, are in the collection of that Museum at Tring, but, as Amadon

reported, the type of *Chalcomitra rubescens stangerii* does not seem to be held there. George Waterhouse gave a small collection brought back by Stanger to Jardine for examination and it is suggested that Jardine subsequently returned it directly to Stanger (letter Waterhouse to Jardine, 10 August 1842). *N. r. stangerii* is not listed in the register of acquisitions of the British Museum for 1842 (although Stanger and Thomson's visit there on 22 September 1842 is recorded), nor is it listed in the Jardine sale catalogue.

Almost directly after returning to England from West Africa Stanger took up an appointment as Surveyor General of Natal, where he died in 1854.

After his death his collections were purchased by public subscription in his home town of Wisbech and presented to the museum there, but there is no record of bird skins in this collection, nor has it been possible to find any of Stanger's notes or papers relating to the Niger Expedition.

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References:

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